

The Honorable Thomas A. Varlan,

My name is Jason Eble. I was born and raised in Harriman, TN and have lived in Harriman all my life. I currently own and operate a physical therapy business in Harriman. I am married to my wife Jazzalynn and have two young girls named Mila and Sofia.

I have known Darren since I was 5 years old. We played on the same little league baseball team and his father and my uncle were good friends; therefore, we would hang out some together such as going to Tennessee football games together. Darren and I played on the same high school basketball team for two years, he was 2 grades ahead of me in school. We hung out some in high school, but for the most part we didn't really become closer friends until after high school when he started coaching as an assistant under my brother-in-law at Harriman High School. During that time, my close friends and I communicated with Darren on a daily basis for approximately 1 year discussing all matters from personal matters, sports, and various topics.

The most important things I can provide your Honor is the goodness that I have seen in Darren Payne. I am by no means saying he is a saint, and he knows he has traveled down a road that has gotten him exactly where he is today, and he deserves the appropriate consequences associated with what he has plead guilty to. With that being said, I think the most important matter at hand is determining whether he can leave this life of bad choices behind him and become a productive citizen in the community. I personally do not believe that the darkness of the past few years will rule over Darren for the rest of his life. In my opinion, the upbringing that Darren has received from his family and friends was too strong for darkness to ruin his life forever. His father Donnie and mother Karren and brother Derrick are absolute quality people who raised their boy to believe in God, have strong faith, and work hard for what you want in this life and you will get it. The values they instilled in their son are permanently placed in his core, and I personally believe Darren ultimately wants to be that person. The best indication that Darren can turn it around is that he has such a good support system who loves and cares about him despite the hardships Darren has caused.

Examples of seeing Darren be a positive influence and a good citizen were observed by me when he and I headed up a fundraiser for our high school basketball school. He and I were the only two people that had the initiative for the fundraiser, and we carried out the entire project of putting on a golf tournament with 20+ teams and asking for sponsors to donate money. Darren oversaw contacting the sponsors, and he was able to get sponsorships from over 30 local businesses. This is what Darren excels at, he could sell anything to anyone; he has a canny ability to make people feel comfortable around him. I recommend he take a job in sales once he is out and ready to restart his life because I know business and he would be incredible at it. We raised over 5 thousand dollars for the school and at that time, I couldn't have been more pleased with the effort and passion he put into raising that money for those kids. He had nothing to gain by doing that, he had the initiative for the idea and the effort to see it through. Shortly after this period, I felt the need to reach out to Darren via text message privately in order to let him know how proud I was of him for turning the corner so to speak and really having a grasp on his life as a man. In my eyes, I saw a guy who always wanted to be cool and live a lifestyle that gave himself some sort of street credit. I knew who Darren was, and I was well aware of how easy his life could get off track and honestly, I wouldn't have been surprised at the least had he ended up in legal trouble at some point. I say all that to say, we all love a story of redemption and Darren was showing me and the community firsthand that he had dropped that cool lifestyle in order to be a good citizen,

community asset, father, and husband. The reason I am able to remember reaching out to Darren to express how proud I was of him is because I actually sent the message to the wrong Darren in my phone, and I remember getting an awkward response from what I later found out wasn't Darren Payne, different Darren stored in my phone. I resent the message to Darren, and he was very appreciative of the message. I also remember having a discussion with my parents about how much Darren helped me with the fundraiser and how he really has his life together by being there for his kids, going back to college to get his degree, and ultimately being productive. My parents, who didn't necessarily like Darren, because they knew he was a troublemaker growing up, harmless troublemaker in my eyes. Examples of harmless troublemaker would include as teenagers smoking cigarettes, stealing a beer from our parents, lying to our parents about where we were, and overall, just not having much respect of parents wishes. My parents wanted me to make all A's and stay straight, and Darren wasn't necessarily that role model they wanted me around. Not to mention, he accidentally shot me in the head when we were like 10 with a bb gun, so needless to say my parents didn't approve of him. With all that being said, I remember my parents trusting what I was telling them about how Darren wasn't the same punk kid we knew. He was doing all the right things and I witnessed that firsthand. I remember my parents being very grateful that he had turned his life around and was on the right track. Following that conversation, as I was telling them how much he had changed for the good was when I felt the need to text him personally.

In conclusion, Darren doesn't deserve 10 years in prison, but he does need consequences for his actions, and he is the type of person that needs to be forced to do something against his will to get the results his family and he are looking for. He needs the best help he can get in order to ultimately suppress this street lifestyle and become the man I personally watched him be just 5 years ago. Darren needs to understand his actions don't go without punishment, but he also deserves a chance to be included in his kid's lives. He deserves to watch their games and be there for their performances and watch them grow up to live happy lives. I know Darren loves his kids, and the most important part of Darren's rehabilitation is going to be to get Darren to let go of looking out for Darren before everyone else. If professionals can decrease this one characteristic of Darren's personality, I know he can be a good-hearted productive citizen again. Learning to put himself second is the winning recipe to fully rehabbing this man into what I know he can be. I have seen him do it once before and with the proper help, he can do it again. Your Honor, it is my recommendation to decrease the amount of time behind bars and increase the amount of professional help in order to fully rehabilitate Darren Payne. I don't think this man would disappoint his family and his friends again if he receives proper sentencing and rehab and is around his parents as much as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Eble, DPT". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "DPT" written in a slightly more formal, blocky style at the end.

Jason Eble